Prepared by:
Dallas Morrow
Planning and Research Branch
Manitoba Education
June, 1986

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Brandon
Career
Symposium
Evaluation
86-05

89-02416/

371.425

Morrow, Dallas.
Brandon Career Symposium evaluation.

(Manitoba. Manitoba Education. Planning and Research. Research ; 86-05)

ISBN 0-7711-0614-9

1. Brandon Career Symposium (Brandon, Man.) 2. Vocational guidance--Congresses. 3. Educational surveys--Manitoba. I. Manitoba. Manitoba Education. Planning and Research. II. Title. III. Series.

SUMMARY

A Careers Symposium, sponsored by the School Counsellors Association, has been held annually in Winnipeg since 1980. For 1986, it was decided that a symposium also be conducted in Brandon, on a trial basis, so as to make this valuable service more readily available to rural schools.

The Planning and Research Branch conducted an evaluation of this pilot program, soliciting opinions from both participating and non-participating schools. The following are some highlights of this evaluation:

- Approximately half of the participating schools had never attended a symposium of this sort before.

- Virtually all of the participating schools found the symposium to be valuable and worth continuing.

- Schools that participated this year will likely participate again. However, based on the responses from non-participating schools, only a few additional schools can be expected to participate in the future.

- Nearly all of the participating schools conducted some form of preparation activities with their students.

- The only specific aspect of the symposium receiving comparatively low ratings was the speakers.

- Some of the suggestions given for improving the symposium were:

    - rectify the problem of speaker cancellations and no-shows.
    - limit speaker time.
    - expand the symposium/offer a greater variety of displays.

RÉSUMÉ

Tous les ans depuis 1980 a eu lieu à Winnipeg un colloque sur les carrières, organisé sous les auspices de la School Counsellors Association. La décision a été prise, pour l'année 1986, de tenir également un colloque à Brandon, à l'essai, afin de mettre ce service important plus à la portée des écoles rurales.

La Direction de la planification et de la recherche a fait une évaluation de ce programme-pilote en questionnant tant les écoles participantes que celles qui n'avaient pas participé. Voici quelques-uns des résultats de l'évaluation :

- Environ la moitié des écoles participantes n'avaient jamais été à un colloque de ce genre.

- Presque toutes les écoles participantes ont trouvé le colloque utile et pensent qu'il faudrait continuer à en organiser de semblables.

- Les écoles qui ont participé cette année participeront sans doute à l'avenir. Toutefois, d'après les réponses des écoles non-participantes, on ne peut s'attendre qu'à une augmentation minime du nombre des écoles participantes dans les prochaines années.

- Presque toutes les écoles participantes avaient fait faire des activités préparatoires à leurs élèves.

- Le seul aspect du colloque qui semble avoir été mal reçu furent les conférenciers.

- Les personnes questionnées firent, entre autres, les suggestions suivantes :

  - il faudrait remédier au problème des conférenciers qui annulent leur participation ou ne se présentent pas.

  - il serait bon de limiter la longueur des présentations orales.

  - le colloque devrait être étendu/les kiosques devraient être plus variés.

BACKGROUND

A Careers Symposium, sponsored by the School Counsellors Association, has been held annually in Winnipeg since 1980. For 1986, it was decided that a symposium be conducted in Brandon, on a trial basis, so as to make this valuable service more readily available to rural schools.

The Planning and Research Branch was requested to undertake an evaluation of this pilot program.

METHODOLOGY

A list of schools registered to attend the symposium (56 schools) and a list of those who were invited but did not register (34 schools) were compiled using the Careers Symposium administrative data. Two survey instruments were designed to solicit opinions from both participating and non-participating schools. The questionnaires were mailed to the contact person from each school as named in the administrative data. The return of surveys was monitored and one reminder/ follow-up was sent. (See Appendix A for actual questionnaires).

The response rate for participating schools was high, around 90%. The non-participating schools' response rate was approximately 65%. A small number of returned questionnaires (four) were eliminated from the study. These were from schools which had not registered but attended (or visa versa) and, as such, had received the wrong survey instrument.

The final numbers of returned questionnaires used for the analysis were:

Participating schools 50

Non-participating schools 20

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Probably the most crucial issue concerning the Brandon Careers Symposium is whether or not it should be held again in 1987. One factor which is an important influence on this decision is the amount and kind of participation. Of the 50 participating schools, 47 agreed that the symposium should be run again. Of the three respondents who disagreed, one suggested that the symposium be conducted every second year. Clearly, those schools that attended the symposium this year believe that it is worth continuing.

Approximately half of the participating schools (24) indicated in the survey that their school had never attended the Winnipeg symposium in previous years. This is an important result as it confirms that the Brandon symposium provided a service to rural schools not traditionally served by the Winnipeg symposium. As well, of the schools which had attended previous symposiums, all but one preferred Brandon.

The 20 non-participating schools were divided in their reported likelihood of attending next year. Thirteen of twenty replied that they were not likely to or would definitely not attend next year. However, seven were either likely to attend or would definitely attend.
Non-participating schools were asked whether there were any changes that they could suggest which might increase their likelihood of attending the symposium. Only one suggestion was made..."expand it".

The reasons for non-participation given by schools included that they didn't participate because they attended the Winnipeg Symposium; their only students were grade nines and the trip was therefore not considered appropriate or really viable; or their school feeds into a school that does attend. A couple of schools simply hadn't budgeted for the trip this year. (See Appendix B for the complete listing of reasons). It is also interesting to note that two of the twenty non-participating schools did send a counsellor or principal to the symposium even though the students did not attend.

Schools that participated in 1986 will likely participate again if the symposium is held next year. It appears that a few additional schools might participate in the future, however, this increase would likely not be substantial.

A series of questions were asked of participating schools in order to gather information on the symposium itself. How valuable was it? How could it be improved? Questions were also included which concerned preparation activities and other aspects of the symposium experience.

The Timing of the Symposium:

A majority of respondents (28) preferred the month of March, although a substantial minority (19) would rather see the symposium held in October. As well, one respondent named February and two named November as preferred months.

Parents' Night:

Slightly more than two thirds of participating schools reported having made a special effort to inform parents about the parents' night.

Preparation Activities:

Virtually all of the schools conducted some form of preparation activities. Only two of the 50 schools did not report engaging in something of this nature. In about half of the schools, this preparation work was conducted by a counsellor. In the remaining half, some other person (principal or classroom teacher) was responsible. The kinds of preparation activities possible are varied, however, this was not investigated further in the study. The amount of time spent on preparation was examined. On average, schools reported that 2.8 hours of preparation activities were engaged in by their students. Schools varied in the amount of time reported, from a low of one half hour to a high of 15 hours.

Value of the Symposium:

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent, if at all, various symposium components were valuable. They were to assign a number from "1" to "5"; "1" meaning "not at all" and "5" meaning "to a great extent". The mean responses to each item were as follows:

	Mean Rating of Value
Preparation activities	4.0
Speakers	3.4
Pamphlet with map of booths	4.2
The career displays	4.2
The symposium as a whole	4.2

Overall, respondents were positive about the value of most aspects of the symposium. The one aspect which received comparatively low ratings was the "speakers". Survey respondents were asked to provide any comments or suggestions on how the symposium could be improved. Their comments in this regard shed some light on what is behind the value ratings. The only consolidated area of concern reflected in the comments was around the speakers. Most frequently mentioned was the number of speaker cancellations or no-shows. This was considered by many respondents to be a significant disappointment. Other suggestions were made to improve the speakers, such as providing a better area for them, limiting them to 20 or 30 minutes, or simply having a greater number and variety of speakers.

Several suggestions were made by respondents, other than those relating to the speakers. These included having a greater variety of booths, more local booths, less education/training booths, and more trades/industrial booths. Most of the suggestions tended to reflect a desire to "make it bigger" and "have a wider selection". (For a complete listing of suggestions, see Appendix C).

CONCLUSION

The Brandon Careers Symposium was well received by the schools which participated. These schools clearly felt that participation was worthwhile. Their evaluation of the symposium reflects this, as does their reported utilization of preparation activities. The symposium has enabled some schools to participate when they previously had not, for whatever reason, ever participated in an endeavor of this nature before.

It is preferable for the symposium to be held in March, although there is also strong support for the month of October. In terms of increasing the participation rate at a future symposium, this is not likely to be significant. However, the current level of participation is solid and can be expected to remain so.

If a symposium is held in Brandon next year, the organizers may wish to consider the suggested improvements appearing in this study. Primarily, respondents desired an expanded symposium with more variety and would also appreciate improvements made to the speaker offerings.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

BRANDON CAREERS SYMPOSIUM' 86

(PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS)

1. This year the Brandon Careers Symposium was held in March. If it is held again next year would you prefer it to be in:

March ☐

October ☐

or Other ☐ (specify) _____

2. a) Did students in your school participate in any preparation activities prior to the symposium?

Yes ☐

or No ☐

IF YES ....

b) Approximately how much time, on average, did each student spend on these activities?

____ hrs. ____min.

c) Who was responsible for conducting the preparation activities (ie. counsellor, principal, classroom teacher, etc.)?

_____

3. To what extent, if at all, would you say the following were valuable?

	To a great extent 5	4	3	2	Not at All 1	Didn't Use/Not Applicable 0
a) preparation activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) speakers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) pamphlet with map of booths	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) the career displays	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) the symposium as a whole	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

4. For the evening of March 4th, the symposium was open to the general public to give parents and others the opportunity to see the career displays. Did your school make a special effort to inform parents about the parents' night?

Yes ☐

or No ☐

5. Do you have any comments on the symposium or suggestions on how it could be improved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. a) In previous years, did your school ever attend the symposium in Winnipeg?

Yes ☐ What year(s)? _____

or No ☐

IF YES ....

b) Given a choice, which symposium would you prefer?

Winnipeg ☐

Brandon ☐

IF WINNIPEG PREFERRED ....

c) Why do you prefer the Winnipeg Symposium over the Brandon Symposium?

_____

_____

_____

7. The Brandon Careers Symposium was conducted as a pilot offering. In your opinion, should the symposium be run again next year?

Yes ☐

or No ☐

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS EVALUATION.

BRANDON CAREERS SYMPOSIUM' 86

(NON-PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS)

1. For what reason(s) did your school not participate in the Brandon Careers Symposium?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. If the symposium were to be held in Brandon again next year, what would be the likelihood that your school would attend?

Definitely attend ☐

Likely attend ☐

Not likely to attend ☐

Definitely not attend ☐

3. a) Would you be more likely to attend if some changes were made to the symposium?

Yes ☐

or No ☐

IF YES ...

b) What changes can you suggest that would make your participation more likely?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. In previous years, did your school ever attend the symposium in Winnipeg?

Yes ☐ What year(s)? _____

or No ☐

5. In the future, would you be more likely to attend ....

the Winnipeg Symposium ☐

the Brandon Symposium ☐

or neither ☐

6. Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to make?

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

APPENDIX B

Reasons for Non-Participation:

- attended the Winnipeg Symposium.
- only have grade nine's (uses their one field trip, is a combined class, not enough interest).
- is a feeder school to one that attends.
- didn't budget for it this year, wasn't aware of it at the time.
- held own school career day.
- extra work for teachers.
- lack of student interest.
- tie up too many buses (too many students).
- not applicable (Hutterite school).

APPENDIX C

Suggestions Related to Speakers:

- cancellations/no-shows.
- more speakers, more variety, have available parents' night.
- too long, should be 20 to 30 minutes.
- not inspired, should be focused on the worksheet questions. - need directions to find the speakers.
- provide better area (reduce noise and distractions).
- don't need keynote speaker.

Other Suggestions:

- make it bigger, expand.
- wider selection.
- more local business booths, more trades/industrial booths, emphasize jobs that are available, more university-oriented professions, less educational/training booths, more careers directed to our 01 level students, more jobs like store clerk or chef.
- more information at booths, more detailed information about displays sent to schools prior to the symposium.
- a better facility (a school, Brandon University or Assiniboine College).
- stress preparation work.
- restrict to grades 10 to 12.
- run continuous showings of general career films.
- have career counsellors with up to date information man the information desks and control booth.
- organize tours of Brandon University and Assiniboine College to coincide with symposium.